



**ERNIE MILLER
NATURE CENTER**

www.erniemiller.com

www.jcprd.com



Tracks
Newsletter

Volume 34, Issue 1

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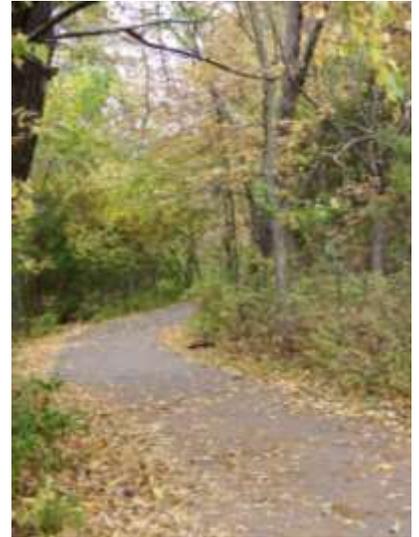
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Fall colors never cease to amaze and excite people of all ages. The reds, oranges, yellows, and even sometimes purple seem to awaken our eyes. Many people seek out the visual stimulation of autumn foliage, sometimes traveling great distances to view this natural phenomenon. I remember as a child playing in the leaves every fall. I loved throwing the leaves the air and burying myself completely, then popping up out of them. The distinctive earthy smell of the fallen leaves brings back these memories as I walk the trails at Ernie Miller Park every fall.

Though seemingly magical there is science behind it all. Most of us remember from science class that the leaves of plants are green because of the pigment chlorophyll. Fueling the process of photosynthesis, this pigment is the life giving source of the plant, absorbing sunlight. But, did you know there are other pigments already present in the leaves that are hiding behind the chlorophyll?



Color change is sparked by colder temperatures and shorter days. These cues cause chlorophyll to decrease due to cork cells that form at the base of each leaf. As the chlorophyll disappears, the yellow xanthophyll and beta-carotene pigments are revealed. Both of these pigments are carotenoids. Hickories, maple, yellow poplar, cottonwood, black cherry, sycamore, and ash are some of the trees that get their golden hues from the carotenoids.

But why do some trees have reds and purples? Oaks, maples, sweetgums, and dogwoods are some of the trees that get their colors from anthocyanins. These pigments are not always present in the leaves, but are formed in the fall as phosphates and other chemicals leave. Brighter, cooler falls result in more brilliant colors from anthocyanin. Many trees combine the pigments of both carotenoids and anthocyanin.

Eventually the cork cells completely cut off the leaf from the tree. Once this happens the leaf falls. This when we get the joy of raking and playing in the leaves. When you see a brown leaf, it indicates a dead leaf with only the cell walls remaining.

This fall while staring at the rainbow of colors, stop and think of what is happening in each individual leaf and cell that gives life to the trees. Though almost miraculous, it occurs year after year, and we are in wonder every time.

Visit Ernie Miller Park this fall to see nature's beautiful display!

**JCPRD Volunteer 2nd Quarter
Award Winners**



Bill & Rosy Jennemann

*Volunteers at TimberRidge Welcome Center
and Ernie Miller Nature Center*

"We had a need for fishing poles to have new line put on them and these two volunteers took at least 25 poles home to restring them. In addition to that, they took the trash can that we use to hold them and using a simple pool noodle converted it into a much more staff and fishing pole carrier. It is so useful and helpful that we asked them to make another one for the ODC camp staff to be able to use. They were both very creative and this has helped staff immensely." Nominated by Lysa Holladay. Both Bill and Rosy also volunteer regularly at Ernie Miller Nature Center. They frequently help at the front desk, amphitheater programs, and with special events.

**JCPRD Celebrates 60,
Ernie Miller Nature Center
Celebrates 30!**



2015 is a special year for both Ernie Miller Nature Center and Johnson County Park and Recreation. Come celebrate with us at two special events.

JCPRD will have an anniversary celebration On Sunday, Sept. 20th featuring JCPRD departments with live music, animal, storytelling, food, hayrides and a beer garden. The event is free. Visit www.jcprd.com/special_events for more information.

Ernie Miller has a birthday party scheduled for Saturday, November 21st and is also free. See page 3 for more details.



SPECIAL EVENTS

**Moths in the Moonlight
(Ages 7 & Older)**

Fri., Sept. 11, 7:30-9 pm

Like a moth to a flame, be drawn into the secret lives of these fascinating insects. We have all seen moths flying around our porch

lights. Why do they do that? Come and learn about their lifecycle, the differences between butterflies and moths. Using black lights, we will attract live moths and other insects and we will play interactive games. **For more information and reservations, call (913)764-7759. Reservations are required. \$3.50 per person (including adults). Paid at site**



**Flight of the Monarch
Sat., Sept. 19, 10 am - 12 pm
(Recommended for ages
8 & up and children
accompanied by one adult
per group of 5)**

Join us in tagging these fascinating insects. Learn about these insects and other native butterflies. See the beautiful wildflowers that attract them. Adults welcome! **For info. and reservations call (913) 764-7759. \$5 per person (including adults) paid in advance, \$7 onsite day of event. Reservations Required. Registration for this event closes Sept 15. Class code: 30100**

**International Observe the
Moon Night
(All Ages)**

Sat. Sept. 19, 7:30-9 pm

Join us for a lunar astronomy program at Ernie Miller Nature Center as we observe the moon in this internationally coordinated event! Observe the moon through a telescope, learn about lunar phases, make impact craters and your very own moon journal, and more! You may also bring your own binoculars, blanket, or chairs. Check out the International Observe the Moon Night website at: www.observethemoonlight.org



Earns JCPRD U Environmental credit \$7 / \$8 nonresidents Reservations Required. For Information call (913) 764-7759. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913)826-3359 to register. Class code: 29788

SPECIAL EVENTS

Scouts: Wildlife Adventure, Sat. October 3, 9:30 am-12:30 pm Come anytime (All Ages of Scouts)

Meet with a JCPRD Park Naturalist and Park Police Officer to explore what they do to help conserve wildlife and our local wild areas. Discover wildlife in our area by meeting live animals from the Nature Center and learn about endangered and extinct species. Bird watch, go on a bug hunt, and learn about poisonous plant and animals. Leave with a bird feeder you made so you too can be a part of the effort to conserve wildlife! This event will help you earn the following Adventures and Badges: Tiger- Backyard Jungle; Bear-Fur, Feathers, Ferns; Wolf-Paws on the Path; Webelos II-Naturalist. Come at any time within the 3 hours. Stations take about 1.5 hours to complete. **For more information call (913)764-7759.**
To register visit www.jcprd.com or call (913)831-3359.
Registration required. \$5 per person paid in advance. \$6 per person on site day of event. Class Code: 30241



Whimsical Woods

Sat., Oct. 10, 1 - 4 pm

(Ages 11 & under and must be accompanied by parent/guardian)

Enjoy a walk on the trail with the award-winning Nature Center staff.

Costumed storybook characters will delight and entertain audiences of all ages. Meet with the Good Fairy and Forest Friends. Live animals, stories, songs, and surprises will highlight childhood favorites. Group sessions begin every 15 minutes with program length approximately 1.5 hours. **Reservations are required. In case of inclement weather, program will be held indoors. New this year, view time slots and register online.**

Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913)831-3359 to register. **\$5 per person (including adults) Paid in advance. \$7 per person on site day of event.**



Haunted Kansas

Sat. Oct. 17 6:30 – 8:00 pm,

(Recommended for ages 8 & up and all children must be accompanied by one adult per group of 5)

As darkness falls, walk through the trails and listen to the stories of long ago. Characters from the past will share legends around the campfire. Expect a shiver down the spine and a mild case of goose bumps for those who dare enter the forest on this autumn evening.

Group sessions begin every 15 minutes and program is approx. 1- 1/2 hours. This is an outdoor event, dress appropriately.

Reservations Required. For Information call (913) 764-7759. New this year, view time slots and register online. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913)826-3359 to register. In case of inclement weather, program will be held indoors. \$5 per person (including adults) Paid in advance. \$7 per person on site day of event .



Ernie Miller Nature Center's 30th Birthday (All Ages) Saturday, Nov. 21, 1-4 pm



Bring the family or scout group and help us celebrate the Nature Center's 30th birthday! For years this has been a place for the young and young-at-heart to make memories, enjoy nature and have fun. Visit different stations for stories, animal presentations, crafts and more. For more information call (913) 764-7759.

1 - 3 hr. event - FREE

Tellabration 2015

Sat., Nov. 21, 10:30-11:30 am
(All Ages)



Want to hear a good story? Come celebrate the International Day of storytelling at the Nature Center. Hear nature stories with live animals. These stories will combine themes of environmental awareness and ancient myths. They will delight all ages. **\$3 per person (including adults) Paid at site. Reservations preferred but not required.**

Winter Solstice Celebration

Sat., Dec. 19, 6:30-8 pm
(All Ages)



Take a break from the holiday festivities as we hike through the woods, along little Cedar Creek to witness the natural display of winter's quiet time. Warm up by the fireside and listen to ancient stories about the longest night of the year. Visit live owls and discover animal mysteries of survival during the long winter. Gather round for campfire treats of toasted marshmallows and hot chocolate. Please note: Portions of this program will be outdoors. Please dress for the weather. For more information call (913) 764-7759. **\$6 per person (including adults) Paid in Advance. \$8 per person on site day of event. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913) 831-3359 to register. Class code: 29930**

ADULT PROGRAMS



Yoga: Green at Heart
(Ages 16 & older) :
Tuesdays, Starting
Sept. 8, 6-7:30 pm

This is yoga for anybody. Have you been curious about yoga but afraid of not measuring up? Would you like to feel more relaxed and peaceful? Come try Yoga at the Nature Center. You will learn and practice a variety of poses to stretch and strengthen your muscles, lubricate your joints, challenge your balance, and promote mental concentration. This class will focus on gentle stretching, serenity and rejuvenation and will be tailored to individual abilities. Please bring mat to class. For more information call (913)764-7759. Registration required. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913)831-3359 to register. **8 - 90 min. sessions - \$56 / \$62 nonresidents.**
Class Code: 30179

Map & Compass: Orienteering Workshop

Sat., Oct. 17 9 am-12pm (Ages 16 & Older) Do you like to hike cross-country



but fear losing your way? This beginner's workshop introduces you to orienteering, a fun way of learning the basic skills for using a topographic map and magnetic compass. This class includes a practice orienteering hike in the park. Workbook and loan of compass are provided. Dress for the weather. Instructor: Possum Trot Orienteering Club. **\$15 (\$17 nonresidents)**
Registration required. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913)831-3359 to register. Class Code: 30180



Go Green:

Worm Bin Workshop

Sat., Nov. 7, 9:30-10:30 am (Ages 18 & Older and Children 8 & Older must Accompanied by Parent/Guardian)

Discover the fun in making dirt inside your home with vermiculture! Make your own worm bin complete with worms to take home. Explore the many benefits of composting at home and learn how to make worm tea. For more information call Andrea Joslin, Park Naturalist (913) 826-2806. Maximum 3 family members for one worm bin. **1-1 hr. session - \$25 (\$28 nonresidents)**

Pre-registration required. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913)831-3359 to register. Class Code: 30108

NEW! Yoga: Green at Heart Hike (Ages 16 & Older)

Sat., Sept. 12 or Oct. 31, 8:30-11 am
Experience the power of a walk in nature fused with the awareness of yoga to stretch and renew your mind, body, and spirit. Come workout in the beauty of the natural world, stimulate your senses, and reap the benefits of hiking combined with the centering relaxation of yoga. For all levels, led by certified yoga instructor, Robin Olson, RYT 200 and Park Naturalist, Molly Postlewait. In case of inclement weather, activities will be inside the Ernie Miller Nature Center.
Registration required. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913) 831-3359 to register. \$8 / \$9 nonresidents.

Class Code: 30159 9/12
30160 10/31

Trip: Squaw Creek Eagle Days

Sat., Dec. 5, 6:45 am-2 pm

(Ages 18 and Older) Visit the yearly



celebration of "Eagle Days" at Squaw Creek

National Wildlife Refuge. This is always a participant favorite, allowing everyone to view our national bird up-close. We will attend a special presentation which includes an up-close look at a mature Bald Eagle. We will tour the refuge and look through spotting scopes to view this amazing bird. It is not unusual to observe 150-200 Bald Eagles on the refuge and surrounding area including other wildlife. We will stop for lunch after birding. **Depart Antioch Park, 6501 Antioch, Merriam, at 6:45 am and return around 2 pm.** Transportation by small bus is provided. Participants must provide meal expenses and should bring binoculars. For more information call (913)826-3469. **To register visit www.jcprd.com or call (913) 831-3359. Pre-registration required. \$47**

Class Code: 30238

MULTIGENERATIONAL

Birding: Owl Prowl

(Ages 16 & Older and Children Ages 5 & Older accompanied by Parent/Guardian)

Whoooo makes his home in Ernie Miller Park? Who else but the Great Horned, Barred, and Screech Owls. Come for an informative talk featuring live owls and an evening hike through the park. You'll never know whooo you might spot! Come dressed for the weather and warm up with a cup of hot cider after the hike. **\$8 (\$9 nonresidents) per person. Preregistration required. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913) 831-3359 to register.**



29793= 11/6 Friday 7:00-8:30 PM

29794= 11/7 Saturday 7:00-8:30 PM

29795= 11/8 Sunday 7:00-8:30 PM

Preschool Programs

Animal Tales (Ages 2-6 with adult) Wednesdays, 10:30 am



Visit the Nature Center for stories, songs, and surprises geared to preschool children. Come listen and learn. Meet a special animal friend every time. All children must be accompanied by an adult. **1-30 min. session - \$2 per person (including adults) Paid at site.**

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 9/2 Butterfly Magic | 9/16 Johnny Appleseed |
| 10/7 Raccoon Ramble | 10/21 Sounds of Nature |
| 11/4 Animal Riddles | 11/18 Turkey Strut |
| 12/2 Winter Homes | 12/16 A Visit with Santa |



Breakfast with Santa (Ages 3-5 with Adult)

Sat., Dec. 12, 9:00 -10:30 am

Kids! Bring a parent and have breakfast followed by a visit with Santa. Enjoy pancakes and juice. Afterwards Santa will explain the winter habits of his animal friends. He also will help you construct a gift for wildlife. Of course, Santa will have a gift for each child and will listen to your

Christmas list. Special Guest: Mr. Claus. **1-90 min. session - \$7 per person including adults (\$8 nonresidents) Preregistration Required. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913) 831-3359 to register. Earns JCPRD U Social Credit. Class Code: 29936**

Preschool Twilight Hike (Ages 2-6 with Adult) Fridays, 7-8:30 pm,



Explore the trails as the sun sets. Listen for the nocturnal sounds of a cricket's chorus and a barred owl's call. Gather around a cheery fire ring for stories, songs, and a tasty treat. Participants should bring a flashlight. **Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913) 831-3359 to register. \$6 /\$7 non residents per person; including adults. Earns JCPRD Physical Credit.**

Class codes:

29931	9/11
29932	9/25
29933	10/2
29934	10/23

Nature Time Yoga (Ages 2-6 with Adult)



Music, movement and imagination!!! Join the Nature Center staff as we act out stories with animal and yoga moves. These parent and child experiences are designed to encourage creativity, coordination, and enhance awareness of the natural world. All children must be accompanied by a participating adult. See a live animal every time. **1 - 30 min. session - \$2 per person including adults/Paid at Site.**

9/9	Wed	10:30 am	10/28	Wed	10:30 am
9/23	Wed	10:30 am	12/9	Wed	10:30 am
10/14	Wed	10:30 am			

YOUTH

Kids & Nature: "Little Cedar Theater" (Ages 6-12)

Do you love nature and enjoy sharing stories with family and friends? Then join us as you learn about nature and how to perform imaginative storytelling using creative dramatics. The class will culminate with a unique opportunity for the young naturalists/actors performing at the Nature Center's special event "Tellabration" on November 21. Instructor: Park Naturalist Molly Postlewait, (913)826-2804. **Classes held: Thursdays, 10/8, 10/15, 11/5, 11/19. 5-6 pm. \$32 / \$35 nonresidents . Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913)831-3359 to register. Earns JCPRD U Social Credit Class Code: 30058**

Home School: Nature Explorers (Ages 6-12)

Enjoy educational programs presented by our Park Naturalists with a different theme each time! Weather permitting we will go outside. Please dress for outdoor exploration. Parent will get tips on how to weave nature into their lessons. **Participating parent must register with child. For more information call (913) 764-7759. \$3.50/ \$4 nonresidents, including adults, per class. Visit www.jcprd.com or call (913)831-3359 to register. Pre-registration required. Earns JCPRD U Environmental Credit**



MAGICAL MIGRATION – The long flight to Mexico for the Monarch Butterfly goes through Kansas. Experience capturing, tagging & releasing these butterflies. Learn about their long migration.
30053 9/24 Thu 3:00-4:15 pm

SIGNS OF FALL – As the seasons change, the plants and animals must adapt. Come and learn how nature changes with the seasons.
30054 10/15 Thu 3:00-4:15 pm

STORIES OF THE PAST - This is the time of year we remember our ancestors. Hear stories of travelers of the past, play Pilgrim and Pioneer games, help with chores & taste Johnny Cake.
30055 11/12 Thu 3:00-4:15 pm

Holidays for the Animals

The holidays are a time of gifts and generosity. How about contributing a gift to the animals at the Ernie Miller Nature Center? The Nature Center has ongoing needs for supplies for both the animals we keep at the center and the wild animals that come to our feeders.

Here is a list of some of our ongoing needs:

- * Various sizes of clear Critter Keeper (carriers) boxes from pet stores with snap tops
- * Bags of black oil sunflower, white millet, or safflower seeds for bird feeders (no mixes)
- * Suet cakes for suet feeders
- * Masking tape or brown duct tape
- * Bags of pine shavings for cage bedding
- * Bags of Reptibark for reptile bedding
- * Rolls of 1/4 and 3/8 inch sisal rope for hawk and owl perches
- * Wood furniture for snake cages (branches, vines & log shelters) ~ need the pet store kind that are treated for insects
- * Ferret hammocks/sleeping bags
- * Bleach, Lysol, or disinfecting cleaner for general cleaning
- * White and Apple Cider Vinegar
- * Laundry detergent
- * Monetary Donations
- * Quart and Gallon Ziploc bags
- * **GIFT CARDS for Price Chopper, Life Time Pets in Olathe, Wal-mart or local pet stores.**



The animals thank you in advance!

Special Thank yous.

- **Arbor Creek Animal Hospital** donates veterinary care for the animals at the nature center. www.acanimalhospital.com
- **Adriana Soto** and her birthday party for the donations to the animals instead of gifts for herself.
- **Josie Whitsitt** and her birthday party guests who donated cleaning wipes, rabbit chow and monetary donations.
- **Go Lizards -Exotic Pet Store & Bait Shop** donates crickets for animal feeding. www.golizards.com
- **Price Chopper on 7 Hwy in Olathe** donates fresh produce for the animals at the nature center.



Hours

Summer hours-March 1– Oct. 31
(Closed from 12-1 pm for lunch)

Monday-Saturday 9 am to 5 pm
Sunday 1:00 to 5 pm

Winter hours-Nov. 1 to Feb. 28

Monday-Saturday 9 am to 4:30 pm
Sunday 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Closed Sundays June, July & August
Park trails open dawn to dusk daily

Closed Nov. 11 for Veterans' Day

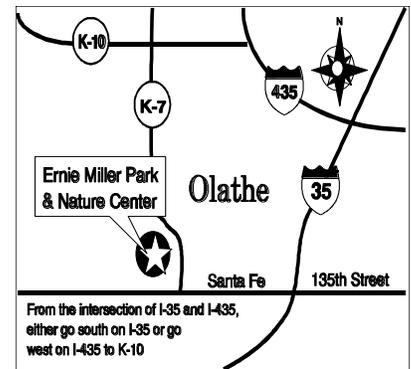


Nature Center Staff

Cindy Lawrence... Interpretive Assistant
Leon Gordon..... Park Supervisor
Bill McGowan..... Outdoor Education Manager
Molly Postlewait... Snr. Park Naturalist
Andrea Joslin..... Park Naturalist and Tracks Editor
Regina Wasson..... Park Naturalist

Ernie Miller Nature Center

909 North Highway 7
Olathe, Kansas 66061
(At the intersection of
127th & K-7)
(913) 764-7759
www.erniemiller.com



From the intersection of I-35 and I-435,
either go south on I-35 or go
west on I-435 to K-10

Johnson County Park and Recreation District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age and handicapped status in employment or the provision of programs and services.